

Reactions of CAC members to four developers at June 16th meeting **As noted by facilitator Anne Tate, discussions, deliberation to follow June 23rd**

Because there is not a lot of time, we are sharing the input to this point and will try to structure the discussion to be as efficient as possible.

As things stand now,

3 people put US2 First

5 put GE/US2 both first

7 put GE first

No other teams were ranked first.

If your name is not below, I have no input from you. I have no rankings from Wig or from anyone else missing from the list below.

Susan Callahan

I've spent time reviewing all of the materials and boy this is difficult! They each have their own strengths while some appear to have more weaknesses than others. Without the benefit of input this evening, at this time US2 and Gerding Edlin are my top choices.

Rebecca Shrumm:

Business perspective: what's important is preservation of local businesses

FRIT and Abbey were less specific about this challenge, GE and US2 had more ideas, more plans for protecting small businesses, (i.e. Pop-up spaces)

Job creation priority: disappointed in FRIT's focus on retail then jobs will follow US2 best on jobs

Abbey's 200,000 sf right away was encouraging

GE less aggressive, more laid back.

Mike Dacey

Chicken and egg: jobs and housing

Commercial space a priority

Liked Abbey's proposal for 200,000SF project to start

Opportunity for innovation

Strong support for Gerding Edlen. The core principles that GE use to guide their business are, in my view, clearly the most aligned with the concerns expressed by the CAC, and the community values of Union Square. In particular, their demonstrated dedication to sustainability practices, affordable housing, alternative transportation needs, and preservation of existing spaces, I find to be extremely impressive coming directly from a developer and I have faith that we would see these notions realized in a final product from GE.

Gerding Edlen has not provided as much of a concrete vision for the square as some of the other firms, but based on their completed projects I am confident that they will

engage the community and rise to the challenge. In the spirit of "The Innovation City", I would rather place risk in someone with higher potential than settle for the familiar.

Union Square is currently attracting national attention for its potential - our aim should be to continue to attract national attention as a neighborhood at the forefront of progressive, sustainable urban development.

Ranking:

- 1. Gerding Edlen*
- 2. US2*
- 3. Abbey Group*
- 4. FRIT*

Joe Beckman

Like GE most: Green is good for Somerville, enhances role as national model

Good on tax advantage

Like US2 modestly, concerned about gentrification of Maxwell Street – not good, but well done. Went to an event they sponsored, impressed with their people.

Liked FRIT more than expected, but don't think they are a fit for Union Sq.

Less impressed with Abbey than expected,

Riverside project - 20 years of politics.

I affirm my first ranking, with a new twist. GE is best, not only for reasons of scale, walkability, diversity of uses, or LEED and green designs, but - and this is a new idea that I want to emphasize - LONG TERM AFFORDABILITY.

As Wig first postulated, this is a ten to twenty year program. Within that long term (I will be 90 by that time, if I'm here at all), energy has GOT to cost a lot more money, and GE (ironic initials for this particular argument) is the most qualified on this by a wide margin. If we're to be concerned with affordable housing and workspace in 2034, we've really only got one option.

Erik Neu

Made spread sheet: Came way with US2 and GE close

US2 at top slightly, very close

Liked US2 focus on keeping what is working in Union Sq. Take advantage of what is here; specific plans about growing businesses, jobs, building off Kendal Sq.

Liked GE because of their buildings, design. But do we want to just be a "really cool Portland"

Balance considerations

Abbey is capable – private capital, family business+ good. Want a depth of finances, some concerns over their hiccups.

FRIT lukewarm – did not stand out in any category. Capable but no pop

Mimi Graney

Trying to filter out the razzle-dazzle
about quality and construction and design, what are they going to build? Trends
change.
for FRIT- appreciate Assembly Row, but we should not put all our eggs in one
basket. Not an option.
Abbey – not impressed with Fenway and integration of the T.
US2 liked better over time, initially negative, now appreciate their work – University
park seems a bit gentrified, streets looked empty – nice design but where are the
people?
Worried about GE's ability to deliver businesses in the way we want.

Kat Rutkin

Focus on local economy. US2 and Abbey stood out.
Liked US2 research – found it irritating and weird but now like it.
Unique strategy for Union Square – technical assistance, sensitive to small local
businesses
Liked Abbey a lot, strong ideas about flexible leases, supporting local business

*I feel that US2 is working hard (with "irritating" research- ha) to create a vision that is
tailored to the unique needs of Union Square and greater Somerville. On a personal
note, I've known a few of the people who've worked for David Dixon over the years as
well and found them to be some of the best in the business of urban planning and
design.*

*I specifically thought Abbey's strength was their flexible leases and subsidized rents,
and their general approach to helping small local businesses get their feet under them
even if it came at a cost to the project. I agree as well that their team was phenomenal.
Although I didn't speak at the meeting about the strengths of Gerding Edlen, I don't
doubt that they have a commitment to the community process and will value input
from the CAC and greater community. I did like their small space/shared amenity idea,
which has since grown on me and would be ideal for many of the businesses in the
local first membership.*

*From the local economy standpoint, I do feel that the chosen developer should
absolutely prioritize commercial space and job creation over retail and housing.
My ranking: US2- Abbey- Gerding Edlen- FRIT*

Molly Rubenstein

No ranked grid, no clear winner, back and forth.
from tone of reports sense more detractors for FRIT and Abbey –
Interested in evolution chain of entrepreneurs in US
Aggressive approach of US2 –pursuing businesses almost at exclusion of other
interests
Abbey and others have additional ideas
GE Impressed by quality of work, visual impact, and sustainability is appealing.

Ranks GE/US2 at top, then Abbey, then FRIT

Robyn Champion

Ranked GE #1, US2 #2, then Abbey – FRIT is “off the table” Assembly Square is fine but it is not a good long term strategy for the city to have so much development tied to one master developer.

Reasons GE is preferred:

- 1 Design Quality and obvious greenness would be extraordinary here.*
- 2. Their strong labor ties is a plus.*
- 3. Focus on LEED certified buildings was highlighted in presentation*
- 4. Experience in Portland, Oregon a plus. I’m familiar with the multi-modal transportation system since Portland has led this for decades*
- 5. Understands that Union Square is already a thriving center, not something that has to be fixed.*
- 6. Really agree with GE’s ‘principles of place’, especially ‘20 minute living’ a very strong idea for me*
- 7. Better than FRIT – more mixed use*
- 8. Better than US2 – examples of scale more what I’d like for Union Square. US2 – a little scared by their big buildings, streets looked quiet,*

(This spurred a clarifying discussion about time of day and year of visit to University Park – mid day visits meant few of the projects had a lot of street life visible – people at work)

Liked Abbey’s infill work – great - but they have not been in the role of a master developer is a concern

Scott Hayman

Based on excellent report from city

Criteria financing, ability to hang in over the long haul

US2- impressed by willingness to use own capital to do stuff

GE: up there too: despite trouble, building in hard markets - impressive redevelopment of neighborhood

Portland had chronic homelessness – they listen and adjust to address community’s needs

GE is way out front on housing and adaptive re-use, sustainability and transportation. Developer who will make kinds of design that strongly encourage walking and biking – in their DNA.

On job development:

US2 for ideas, infill, best on ground and listening – high marks.

Business development, retaining local fabric and businesses, not scorched earth.

Responsiveness: US2 up there.

Abbey did not answer questions as well, presentation was dull.

FRIT responsive and has gone the distance with city.

EriC Fellingner

Union Sq. Main Streets

Haven't absorbed all the material, but did read the report.

Be sure we get someone who will get it done. Has patient capital. And capital aligned with our values.

FRIT is an investment trust – answerable to shareholders. Cf private capital of Abbey group whose principal came to speak with us and would be here.

Interest in design – making a great place – I live in the city by choice – want a great city – design, progressive transportation

GE first.

US 2 and Abbey in tie for second.

Abbey would be responsive

US2 has financial capability and is super interested – has made lots of effort, their very big projects of some concern.

FRIT is “off the table”. Concerned about their formulation that commercial development follows retail and housing – we already have people in the square – we have the foot traffic – we need the jobs.

Philip Parsons

Everyone has said it all

Aligned with Eric.

FRIT – same concern about eggs in one basket, we need diversity.

Scale of Chicago vs Portland (vs Boston):

Portland is more like Somerville, (Portlandia aside), the struggles are the same. Not a wealthy city.

US2 Obsessive engagement – lots of great ideas.

Effort because it is so different from big Chicago. They seem to understand that the job is different from what they have done elsewhere.

Abbey is local, works locally, at same time Boston isn't Somerville either.

Short term investment vs. Family firm in their favor.

Revised rankings to put GE first, US2 second.

Pat McCormick

Agree with so much that has been said,

Amanda's blog was great.

Somervision gives us a solid start.

Emphasis on bikes and pedestrians – how the world is changing – all developers cited data on trend to fewer cars, not enough evidence on bikes, what we think of as retain land business is changing rapidly, we need new flexible smart forms of workspaces and multi modal travel.

Favor GE and US2.

US2 came up, GE still a little ahead.

Would favor FRIT over Abbey, they know Somerville and the T.

Abbey has great traits, Landmark is not pedestrian or bike friendly and is full of chain stores. Province street luxury cars block bike and pedestrian access. They've

done good things but not stellar.

Gordon Wong

Primarily concerned about who can best discover, design and execute on what Somerville needs, balanced by what Somerville wants. As part of that, developers need to demonstrate they can embody their client's requirements and not just re-execute what has worked for them in the past.

US2: Both impressed and a bit cautious about the amount of outreach they have done to date. It bodes well for their ability to connect with the community in the future but also strikes me as somewhat tactical in terms of getting more 'votes'. Also impressed by what seemed to be a patient and strategy approach to their financing.

GE: Decidedly the most progressive of the developers. Very impressed by their emphasis on sustainability. Have been to the Pearl District and was blown away when I was there. Concerned that they are a west coast firm...from experience, remote projects are always bumpier than local ones. Some concern that ideals e.g. sustainability might trump practicality.

Abbey Group: want to like the Abbey Group but for some reason only feeling lukewarm about them. Fenway doesn't wow me. Concerned they don't have the experience for a project like this.

FRIT: Really haven't heard anything that impresses me about FRIT. On the one hand, it's unfair to extrapolate from Assembly Row what they would do in Union Square as that is probably the right solution for that area but not a lot of examples of what they would do differently

Overall, it's between US2 and GE. US2 feels like the safer bet. GE feels like it has a higher ceiling. Rather be audacious and go with GE

Anne Tate

GE: I liked the deep DNA of sustainability and design quality

US2: I know most of the design teams brought in, they are VERY good local designers – best of Boston, younger firms

Abbey group: also has a top notch, super impressive set of consultants

FRIT: has enough of Somerville right now – good job at Assembly square but still slips up in including the community in design decisions.

Further thoughts:

Between Gerding Edlin and US2, we seem to be weighing the value of the more attentive team (US2) and the one with the product that matches us best (GE). I believe there are good reasons to go with experience and core competencies. Of all four teams the one whose mission and product aligns with the goals of Union Square and Somervision is Gerding Edlen. US2 has been very impressive in their outreach, some of their ideas, and the design team they promise to bring. But in the end the US2

partnership is untested. From reviewing websites and digging further into US2, everything is a new conglomeration: The Magellen/Mesirow/Stantec partnership is new. Stantec, which would be the Boston base, is currently expanding its Boston capabilities: David Dixon joined Stantec just this spring, Drew Leff who initiated the interest in Union Square, was at GLC and they apparently recently joined Stantec too. There is a commitment to becoming a Boston developer, they are proposing to put together a good design team, but none of those people are locked in and these are all new relationships. To date, the local projects by Stantec have been parks, and one museum where they helped execute for another architect.

But I would put GE first for additional reasons: Sustainability and new ideas.

I think this moment is key for Somerville and the region, and it is important to bring in some fresh ideas and resources. And a quantum leap in sustainability, with an integrated approach to environmental, social and economic goals, is crucial to me. Gerding Edlin has this as their core mission and they have demonstrated that commitment. I think their distance is an asset of sorts, as it gives them a different perspective and ambitions. Around here we are too accustomed to settling for half measures and less than the best. GE obviously knows how to work with communities and to run an inclusive process, they are attentive to the needs of their host communities. US2 has been busy taking our temperature and trying to find out what we want, and that is good, but it is also a little sycophantic. I don't want someone to come execute my vision, I want someone to add to it, to increase my expectations not just meet them, to show me what else is possible. We are not a pushover community. We know how to stand up for what we believe in. But we don't have all the answers. They (GE) have the capacity to raise our standards and introduce new ideas, so on reflection, I would recommend them as first choice and US2 as second.

Wig Zamore: Deferred to member opinions at meeting, but favor Gerding Edlen.